



# CATAWBA COUNTY

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Public Health

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## **Air Quality Awareness Encouraged**

When it comes to air quality, many of us believe that it is only an issue during the summer. However, air quality remains a problem year round with ozone being a concern in the summer and pollution, or particulate matter, posing a problem year round. Catawba County Public Health is working with local officials to raise the importance of air quality awareness and what citizens can do to help reduce the level of negative ozone emissions and protect the level of “good” ozone.

It is important for everyone to know that there is actually “good” ozone that protects our health. Stratospheric ozone, which is the layer that extends upward from about 6 to 30 miles, protects life on Earth from the sun’s harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays.

But along with “good” ozone, there is “bad” ozone that plays a more immediate impact on people’s health. Ground-level ozone is a pollutant that significantly provides health risks and is a main ingredient of urban smog. It also damages crops, trees, and other vegetation.

“Even though we do not see ozone, it’s there,” explained Tracey Paul, health educator at Catawba County Public Health. “It can be harmful to everyone’s health so it is important to know about the dangers of ozone.”

High amounts of ground-level ozone especially affect the elderly and those with breathing problems including asthma and COPD.

For those who have breathing problems, athletes and coaches, it is important to monitor the EPA’s ozone forecast. The ozone level guide can help people to know when they should take extra precaution before going outside. The North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources’ Division of Air Quality updates the area’s air quality forecast on a daily basis. The area’s air quality forecast can be found on the Division of Air Quality’s website at: <http://xapps.enr.state.nc.us/aq/ForecastCenter#area6>.

“We want to encourage anyone with a website to add a link to the state’s air quality forecast for their visitors to see,” suggested Paul. “Catawba County also has a link on their website and is providing updates to residents via Facebook and Twitter.”



*“Leading the Way to a Healthier Community”*

[www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth)





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The Air Quality Index is divided into five color coded categories to help people identify the level of action needed and when they should limit outdoor exposure.

## Air Quality Index (AQI)

Color Code	AQI	Air Quality Description
Green	0-50	Good
Yellow	51-100	Moderate
Orange	101-150	Unhealthy for sensitive groups
Red	151-200	Unhealthy
Purple	201-300	Very Unhealthy

To help battle the effects of ozone, there are simple steps that everyone can take:

- Wait until after sunset to mow your grass.
- Refuel your car early in the morning or late in the afternoon and stop when the nozzle clicks off. Don't overfill or drip fuel. Fuel creates ozone-causing vapors as it evaporates.
- Pack your lunch and eat at work rather than driving during your break.
- Car-pool with friends whenever possible.

“By making these small changes, people can have a positive impact to a problem that affects everyone,” encouraged Paul.

To learn more about ozone prevention you may call Tracey Paul at 828-695-5861, visit the Catawba County Public Health website at [www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth](http://www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth), or visit the North Carolina Division of Air Quality website at [www.daq.state.nc.us/](http://www.daq.state.nc.us/).



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